



MONTHLY HIGHLIGHTS

NOAA
NATIONAL MARINE FISHERIES SERVICE
NORTHEAST REGION
HABITAT CONSERVATION DIVISION

March 2004

GLOUCESTER, MA OFFICE, ONE BLACKBURN DRIVE, GLOUCESTER, MA 01930

NANTUCKET SHORELINE STABILIZATION PROJECT

The Habitat Conservation Division (HCD) is in the process of reviewing a shoreline stabilization project that includes the placement of 660 feet of durable plastic fencing within the intertidal zone along the Atlantic coast of Nantucket Island. NOAA Fisheries is concerned that this project is located along a high-energy shoreline and that wave impacts resulting from storms may lead to failure of the structure. Plastic fencing floating free in the marine environment could have adverse effects on a number of NOAA trust resources including finfish and marine mammals, as well as endangered sea turtles, due to unintentional capture and/or entanglement. The HCD will be providing recommendations to avoid or minimize adverse impacts on living marine resources. (Christopher.Boelke@noaa.gov, 978/ 281-9131)

JAMES J. HOWARD MARINE SCIENCES LABORATORY, HIGHLANDS, NJ 07732

DOCKS IN SHELLFISH BEDS

The issue of docks in shellfish beds has reemerged in Monmouth County, New Jersey. The New York District, Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) has recently sent out several Letters of Coordination (LOC) and Public Notices for docks in shellfish beds within the Shrewsbury and Navesink Rivers which are not consistent with the requirements of the Statewide General Permit, SPGP-19. This programmatic permit is very useful because it allows docks in areas mapped as commercially harvestable shellfish beds if they meet several conditions, including the use of non-polluting materials for all components of the dock and floats and a maximum of two mooring areas each with boat lifts. Prior to the revisions to SPGP-19, docks in shellfish beds were prohibited in New Jersey and we traditionally opposed any projects. Yet, for nearly two years since SPGP-19, nearly 80 docks have met the environmentally safe criteria. Recently, noncompliant applications have come to us for review from the ACOE. In the past month, four applications showed up. Further coordination with the ACOE is planned to encourage the project managers to contact the state to determine the projects' review status, and also with the applicants to encourage project revisions to comply with SPGP-19 prior to issuing public notices.

or LOCs. (Karen.Greene@noaa.gov, 732/ 872-3023 or Stanley.W.Gorski@noaa.gov, 732/ 872-3037)

HURRICANE AND STORM DAMAGE REDUCTION PROJECT - UNION BEACH

HCD staff reviewed the *final Feasibility Report and Environmental Impact Statement* (FR/FEIS) prepared by the New York District, Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) for the proposed Raritan Bay and Sandy Hook Bay, Hurricane and Storm Damage Reduction Project, Union Beach, Monmouth County, New Jersey. The FEIS discusses construction of levees, floodwalls, storm gates, pump stations, groins, revetments, and other structures in the town of Union Beach in order to minimize storm damage. The project also includes beach nourishment and the dredging of sand from four potential new borrow areas in the Raritan-Sandy Hook Bay area. Our October 2003 comments focused on the need to complete both the essential fish habitat (EFH) consultation required under the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act (MSA) and the Section 7 Endangered Species Act consultation. Issues of concern include the designation of four new borrow areas in valuable fisheries habitat, the impacts on shellfish beds, wetlands, and sea turtles. In response, we provided the ACOE with several EFH conservation recommendations including placing all structures, levees, floodwalls, pump stations, storm water management basins, or berms entirely within upland areas. We also recommended against placing barriers of any kind, including stormgates or tidegates, across any tidal waterway, beach nourishment of any kind, and the use of any offshore borrow areas, new or existing, for this or any other shore protection or beach nourishment project along the Raritan-Sandy Hook Bayshore. ESA consultation is still in process. [Karen.Greene@noaa.gov, 732/ 872-3203 or Julie.Crocker@noaa.gov, 978/ 281-9328 (for ESA issues)]

SOUTH AMBOY INTERMODAL FERRY TERMINAL

The New Jersey Department of Transportation, on behalf of the City of South Amboy and the Federal Highway Administration, submitted a draft environmental assessment for the proposed South Amboy Intermodal Ferry Terminal project for our review. South Amboy proposes to construct a new ferry terminal on the waterfront of Raritan Bay which involves the construction of an access roadway, parking facilities, a ferry terminal building, docks and walkways over wetland and shallow water habitat, and a breakwater with a 40-foot wide public access walkway on top. Dredging to create the ferry mooring area and the access channel is also proposed. HCD believes that the EA does not address adequately the impacts of the proposed project on aquatic resources and essential fish habitat (EFH). Also, the project alternatives are not evaluated fully including a ferry terminal already operating in South Amboy. Basic project site information, such as existing depths in the proposed ferry basin, is also lacking. Without additional information to address project alternatives and impacts, HCD would have to maintain a very conservative and protective stand on this project. (Karen.Greene@noaa.gov, 732/ 872-3023)

BP AMOCO CROWN LANDING PROJECT

Habitat staff is reviewing a document, Draft Environmental Resource Report, February 18, 2004, Crown Landing LLC, Liquefied Natural Gas Import Terminal, Logan Township, Gloucester County, New Jersey. Crown Landing LLC proposes to construct and operate a liquefied natural gas (LNG) import terminal on the Delaware River and would consist of facilities capable of unloading LNG carriers, storing up to 450,000 cubic meters of LNG, vaporizing the LNG, and sending out the natural gas at a rate up to 1.2 billion cubic feet per day. The project will tie into

existing pipelines owned and operated by Columbia Gas Transmission Company and Transcontinental Gas Pipe Line Corporation, and to a Texas Eastern Transmission LP lateral that will be constructed across the Delaware River from Pennsylvania to the project site. NMFS' major concern with this project is the conversion of approximately 12 acres of shallow water habitat to depths of 45 feet for the berthing area. This impact has bearing on EFH, anadromous fish habitat, and the endangered shortnose sturgeon habitat. Security and safety issues are serious considerations in these projects that offer challenges to us in arriving at an appropriate balance for amelioration of impacts on our NOAA trust resources. Three federally funded studies into LNG hazards are under way: one sponsored by Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, another by the Department of Energy, and a third by the NOAA.
(Anita.Riportella@noaa.gov, 732/ 872-3116)

MILFORD, CT OFFICE, 212 ROGERS AVENUE, MILFORD, CT 06460

SOUTHERN NEW ENGLAND ENERGY PROJECT UPDATE

The shortage of natural gas and the rising cost of both it and liquid petroleum products are acting in concert to create an increasing number of energy project applications in the region between New York and Massachusetts. The utility and appropriateness of siting wind driven electric generators in the waters off Cape Cod are issues being addressed by the Cape Wind LLC in an extensive National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) review. Meanwhile, there are three proposed Liquid Natural Gas Terminals in the Narragansett Bay area as well as upgrades and retro fits of pipelines and pumping stations throughout the region. NOAA's Coastal Programs Office is considering the Coastal Consistency Appeal by Islander East for their proposed Branford, CT to Shoreham, NY 24-inch natural gas pipeline across Long Island Sound. The Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection's finding of inconsistency has been supported by a finding that the proposal does not meet the State's 401 water quality certificate criteria. The appeal decision is pending by late April. The removal and replacement of the seven cable electrical interconnection between Norwalk, CT and Northport, NY is in the active review process. We have received the 18-month post installation monitoring investigation of the Cross Sound Cable running between New Haven, CT and Shoreham, NY. The report indicates that there is no apparent, unacceptable, long term physical damage to the seabed from the hydrojetting of the cable to six feet below the seabed surface. There are seven sites within New Haven Harbor where the cable has not been set at its authorized depth. However, a moratorium on alternative installation methodologies has precluded resolution of the problems. The monitoring of the projects is being used to both advance the understanding of installation and operation impacts as well as further the literature base on the rate of seabed recovery.
(Michael.Ludwig@noaa.gov, 203/ 882-6504)

FEDERAL FEASIBILITY STUDY INITIATED FOR LAKE MONTAUK

The New York District, ACOE' Planning Division has initiated a feasibility study for deepening the existing federal project at Lake Montauk Harbor to -16 ft MLW in the outer channel and to -14 ft MLW in the inner channel. In addition, the plan includes advanced maintenance dredging east of the authorized channel; dredging and removal of a shoal from the inshore end of the east jetty; rehabilitating a portion of the east jetty; extending the west jetty inshore; and placing the

material on an eroding shoreline. Staff from the Milford Field Office will be coordinating with the New York District on the Essential Fish Habitat (EFH) and Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act portions of upcoming NEPA review. (Diane.Rusanowsky@noaa.gov, 203/ 882-7504)

MARINE PROTECTED AREA (MPA) CREATED FOR COMMERCIAL PIER MITIGATION

Stonington, CT has resolved the remaining issues regarding the half-acre extension of their southern, Commercial Pier. The addition will provide additional wave protection for the northern pier and afford more long-side berthing of the commercial fleet using both piers at the Stonington facilities. As a result of the Town's willingness to mitigate the fill for the pier, they have agreed to improve anadromous fish access to spawning areas in a tributary to the Harbor and designate a 2.5 acre area immediately behind the central breakwater as a natural resource area. In the protected area no mooring or mobile gear can be used. The city will use their Harbor Management Plan to codify the resource area (MPA). The use of an MPA is presently discussed in the Plan and the designation stands as an excellent example of their commitment to the well being of their Harbor. We believe that their action is a first in the CT Harbor Management Program and will be encouraging other communities to embrace the concept and action. (Michael.Ludwig@noaa.gov, 203/ 882-6504)

STATEN ISLAND MARINA PROPOSES EXPANSION

Mansion Marina, Inc. is seeking ACOE authorization to increase their berthing spaces and generally enlarge their marina basin within Great Kills Harbor, New York. Coordination pursuant to the EFH portions of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act and the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act is ongoing. (Diane.Rusanowsky@noaa.gov, 203/ 882-7504)

FINAL YEAR OF RHODE ISLAND DREDGING IMPACT INVESTIGATION

The Consortium of state, federal, university and private sector researchers investigating the impact of dredging induced resuspended sediment is drawing to a close after three years of design and implementation in Rhode Island waters. One focus has been the well being of winter flounder embryos and larvae in and around the dredges working on the Providence River Federal Navigation Channel. Other studies have sought to define the plume field and source concentration of the plume. Investigations on "bulking" factors of different sediment types are being brought to conclusion along with questions on barge loading and the relationship between in-place volume and the consequences of barge movements on sediment sorting and hydration. A mix of modeling, laboratory, and field work is being completed during this final year with some electronic plume tracking using acoustic doppler current profiler is scheduled for later this year. These investigations owe their genesis and support to a broad spectrum of individuals and groups. The Hudson River Foundation of New York proved themselves funding lifesavers as the unusual weather conditions of this past winter compounded the problems created by the winter of 2002-2003 and stretched budgets beyond the breaking point. We are deeply appreciative that they recognized the value of the investigations and were willing to support the final efforts. (Michael.Ludwig@noaa.gov, 203/ 882-6504)

EASTCHESTER EXTENSION PROJECT UPDATE

On October 29, 2003, the New York District, ACOE issued a modification to the post-construction requirements for the Eastchester Extension Project, a natural gas pipeline

constructed and operated by the Iroquois Gas Transmission System between Long Island and the Bronx, New York. Pursuant to this permit modification, Iroquois has submitted a multi-beam post-construction survey in the vicinity of several electric transmission cables that were traversed by the new pipeline. Staff will review these data and coordinate with the New York District, ACOE, should additional measures be necessary in this portion of the project. The pipeline has been in service since earlier this calendar year. (Diane.Rusanowsky@noaa.gov, 203/882-7504)